

Study will Determine Feasibility of Hurricane Protection Projects for Iberia, St. Martin and St. Mary Parishes

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FRANKLIN, LA - Today, U.S. Rep. Charlie Melancon announced that south central Louisiana is one major step closer to comprehensive protection from future hurricanes and flooding. In a press conference with local elected officials, Melancon announced that Congress has passed a portion of his hurricane protection legislation that authorizes the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to "survey the coast of Louisiana in Iberia, St. Martin, and St. Mary Parishes a view to determine the feasibility of providing hurricane protection and storm damage reduction and related purposes." These parishes were severely damaged in 2005 by Hurricane Rita.

"Rita is sometimes called the 'forgotten storm,'" said Melancon. "But for those of us who lived through it, the damage caused by this monster storm will always be remembered."

"While the federal government has been slow to realize our dire need for hurricane protection in coastal Louisiana, this study will bring us one step closer to getting the help we need to shield ourselves from future storms," said Melancon.

Rep. Jack Smith, who represents parts of Iberia, St. Martin and Mary Parishes, added, **"I want to thank Congressman Melancon for pushing the federal government to move forward on hurricane protection for south Louisiana. As we recover from Rita, the memory of the utter devastation caused by Hurricane Andrew is still fresh in our minds. We are tired of rebuilding after every major storm and need better protection from hurricanes and flooding."**

Franklin Mayor Raymond Harris also joined Melancon for the announcement. Harris commented, **"Like many communities in southern Louisiana, Franklin suffered from major flooding after Hurricane Rita. The people of Franklin welcome this announcement and thank Congressman Melancon for his work to get us comprehensive hurricane protection."**

The legislation was passed in the form of a study resolution by the U.S. House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure before Congress adjourned last month. Once an appropriation for the study is passed, the Corps will begin the study.

The resolution came from section 105 (a) of the [MARC Act \(H.R. 5461\)](#), which Congressman Melancon authored and introduced in May. The Meeting Authorizations Required for the Coast (MARC) Act of 2006 is a barebones package of authorizations for critical Army Corps of Engineers projects that address critical hurricane protection and coastal restoration issues along the gulf coast of Louisiana and Mississippi. Most of the projects have already been designed by the Corps but have been waiting for passage of a Water Resources Development Act (WRDA), the authorizing legislation for Corps projects that is now four years overdue.

The projects address issues that previously existed as well as some that have arisen since the 2005 hurricanes. All of the projects focus on hurricane or flood protection and coastal restoration. These two activities are strongly related, in that increased wetlands, marshes, and barrier islands play a large role in absorbing much of the force of hurricanes before they hit populated land. Navigation and economic development issues are omitted from this bill in the interest of maintaining the focus on safety and protection of the Gulf Coast populations.

Melancon concluded, "I will continue to work in Congress for comprehensive hurricane protection for all of coastal Louisiana. This is not about funding *wants*, this about taking care of *ne eds* that have been neglected for decades. We must protect our families, communities, and businesses from future storms. Our way of life depends on it."

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